

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Madison School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004**

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left not addressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Data sources used:

B – District/Agency Instructional Staff Information

C – Suspension and Expulsion Information

D – Statewide Assessment Information

E – Enrollment Information
F – Placement Alternatives
G – Disabling Conditions
H – Exiting Information
Parent survey, referrals, publications of child find notices
Comprehensive plan
Board policies
Yearly child find results
School sped expenditures and budget
Child count data
Private school information
SIMS
Placement alternatives
IEPs
File
Reviews
Workshop
Area training
Employee handbook
Grants
TTL

Promising Practices

The steering committee concluded that special education staff development and training are driven by the student's needs and disabilities, which is proven by the data collected from staff and the staff development and training documentation.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined that the district has systems for receiving documented referrals as determined by the groups surveyed involved in the child find activities, file reviews and surveys as specified through state regulations and school policies. In addition, the committee concluded relevant school data is used to analyze and review the district's progress toward the state performance goals and indicators.

The steering committee concluded the district follows state policies and procedures and the comprehensive plan regarding the placement and services of students voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools.

The district, it was determined by the steering committee, follows and adheres to the state guidelines for reporting of students who have been suspended, expelled, or dropped out.

Through review of Table B, the steering committee concluded that the district employs and contracts with personnel who are fully licensed or certified to work with children with disabilities.

The steering committee reached consensus that the district utilizes the comprehensive plan, local and state policies and regulations and staff needs to fulfill the general supervision requirements.

Validation Results:

Promising Practices

The district is required to provide special education staff development and training that are driven by student needs and disabilities; therefore, the monitoring team did not validate this as a promising practice in the area under general supervision.

Meets Requirements

Through interviews, state data tables and file reviews, the monitoring team validated the steering committee's conclusion that all areas under the principle of general supervision meet the requirements.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

State Tables B, C, E, F, K, L, M, N

Number of students screened

Number of referrals not resulting in evaluations

Personnel development education

Preschool-school age/age at referral

Personnel training

Budget information

Comprehensive plan

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded the district's current practices and past reviews from the state and federal special education monitoring demonstrates the school district provides a free appropriate public education for all children with disabilities.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The review team validated the district meets the requirements for the provision of a free appropriate public education to children with disabilities, with the exception of the area identified under out of compliance.

Out Of Compliance:

ARSD 24:05:18:03 Procedures for identification of misclassified children

Each public agency must maintain specific documentation as to the identification, evaluation, program and placement of each child with disabilities.

ARSD 24:05:18:05 Program Reviews

The division shall conduct program administrative reviews to determine whether students have been classified according to this article. If, as a result of these reviews, the division determines that Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B funds, have been made available to an eligible public agency as the result of a misclassified child, the division shall begin recovery procedures.

The monitoring team was unable to validate an IEP was in effect on December 3rd, 2002 for a student listed on the district's child count. Through interview, district staff indicated the error pertained to a student who had transferred.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input, conducts a comprehensive evaluation. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

State Tables G, H, I, J

File reviews

Surveys

Comprehensive plan

TAT information

Initial referrals

Parent and teacher report forms

IEPs

Permission to evaluate forms

SIMS

Psychological reports

Report cards

Progress reports

Promising Practice

The steering committee concluded the district's personnel are trained in limited English proficient procedures for students with English as a second language as a promising practice. In addition, the committee determined a promising practice to be that an agency was contacted to help interpret for parents who were hearing disabled, and that this was done for conferences, MDT and IEPs.

The steering committee determined another promising practice is that teacher referral forms are distributed for each teacher involved with the child. These results are taken into consideration when evaluations are selected for the child.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee reached consensus that the school district is compliant in this area with knowledgeable staff and parental input, through the review of IEPs, policies and procedures adopted by the school district and following the appropriate state regulations and procedures. In addition, it was concluded by the steering committee that the school district follows regulations and requirements set forth by the state for testing instruments to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for initial and re-evaluation eligibility. The team also considers all evaluations to determine a category of disability and provides documentation of eligibility determination to the parent(s).

Needs Improvement

The steering committee found that functional assessments were not completed for 30 of the 65 files reviewed, but since October 2002, staff have completed functional assessments for all IEPs at their annual or three year reevaluations.

In addition, the steering committee concluded the district has not always completed re-evaluations in the required time lines; thus, the committee identified this as an area in need of improvement.

Validation Results**Promising Practice**

The monitoring team did not validate the district's promising practices identified by the steering committee. When a student(s) with English as a second language attend a district, the personnel are required to have training in limited English proficiency procedures. The district is also responsible to provide an interpretation of the prior notices, MDT and IEP in the parents' mode of communication.

In addition, the district is required to use test instruments to insure comprehensive student evaluations and consideration of all the evaluation data must be done to determine each student's disability category. The district is then required to provide documentation of the eligibility determination to the parent(s).

The monitoring team did not validate that referral forms being distributed to each teacher involved with the child and the results being taken into consideration when evaluations are selected for the child as a promising practice. A district is required to obtain data from several sources when making a student referral to insure completion of a comprehensive evaluation.

Meets Requirements

The team validated the district provides documentation of eligibility determination to the parents.

Needs Improvement

In interviews and file reviews, the monitoring team found the district is meeting the three-year reevaluation timelines. In interviews, district staff expressed confusion whether the date of the evaluation report or the date of the student's last evaluation should be used to determine the reevaluation date. The team agreed this is an area that needs attention. At the exit conference, the team clarified that the current date of the last test administered to the student is used to determine the student's reevaluation timeline.

Out of Compliance

Issues requiring immediate attention

24:05:22:03 Certified Child

A certified child is a child in need of special education or special education and related services who has received a multidisciplinary evaluation and has an individual education program formulated and approved by a local placement committee. Documentation supporting a child's disabling condition as defined by Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be maintained by the school district for verification of its annual federal child count.

The monitoring team found that a student referral had listening comprehension and oral expression as concerns; however, those areas were not evaluated. The IEP team initiated an override with no evaluation data to support services in those areas.

Two files reviewed by the monitoring team indicated the students were receiving speech/language and occupational therapy services. Through review of each child's evaluation data and an interview with the speech/language therapist, the monitoring team concluded that neither student had oral motor related disabilities. Neither student, therefore, was in need of occupational therapy as a related service.

The team found documentation of a parent's concern pertaining to reading comprehension. The student was evaluated in the areas of intellectual ability and language, but no academic achievement assessments had been completed. The student was dismissed with no consideration for the potential eligibility as a student with a specific learning disability.

ARSD 24:05:04:02 Determination of Needed Evaluation Data

A team of individuals, including input from the student's parents, determines what evaluation data is needed to support eligibility and the child's special education needs. The student files reviewed by the monitoring team systemically had documentation of parent input. The team found documentation from parents that expressed concerns regarding their child's behavior; however, the student's evaluation did not include any standardized or functional behavioral assessments. Through interviews, it was determined this had been an unintentional error made by the district's evaluation team.

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation Procedures

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, and those evaluation procedures include a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child. The team determined through eight file reviews completed after October 2002, that functional assessments had not been completed when the students were evaluated. In the review of two student files, the team found social skill assessments were not a component of the evaluations. The assessments were required to determine both students' disability.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

State Tables L and M

Surveys

Parental rights document

Public awareness information

File reviews

Comprehensive plan

Consent and prior notice forms

FERPA disclosure

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined the district ensures notification to parents of their rights, parents fully understand for what activity consent is being sought and parents have the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning their child in the provision of a free and appropriate public education. In addition, the school district has training, policies and procedures for surrogate parents.

The steering committee concluded the district has policies and procedures to address complaint issues and requests for due process hearings.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team agreed with the steering committee that the areas under the principle of procedural safeguards meet the requirements.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

Comprehensive plan

Student progress data

Budget information

Surveys report form

File reviews

Personnel training

State Tables K and N

Promising Practice

The steering committee concluded that the district completes progress indicator reports for each student as part of the IEP process. In addition, the committee determined that all IEPs are tailored to meet the individual needs of each student and this information is provided in the parental rights notice.

The steering committee reached consensus that district's inclusionary practices of team teaching, collaborative planning, collaborative student awareness meetings, peer tutoring, and speech/language enrichment are promising practices.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded that the district has procedures and policies in place to ensure written notices to parents and/or guardians have the required content. The committee also determined the district utilizes an appropriate IEP format to ensure the each IEP contains the required content. In addition, the steering committee concluded the district has policies and procedures in place for the provision of an appropriate IEP team and that IEPs are developed and in effect for each eligible student.

The steering committee also concluded that transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities preparing them for post school activities.

Out of Compliance

The steering committee concluded that the present levels of performance in only 68% files reviewed contained specific skills in the student's strengths, weakness, and the student's involvement in the general curriculum. In addition, they determined that only 46% of the IEPs reviewed, contained documentation of the frequency, location, and duration of services and modifications.

Validation Results**Promising Practice**

The team was unable to validate the inclusionary activities identified by the steering committee as promising practices. Through interviews, the team determined the district's team teaching, collaborative planning, collaborative student awareness meetings and speech/language enrichment activities are not innovative or unique practices.

Based on the requirements, the monitoring team did not validate the promising practice pertaining to the district completing progress indicator reports for each student as part of the IEP process. The team also did not validate the promising practice that all IEPs are tailored to meet the individual needs of each student and this information is provided in the parental rights notice. IEPs are required to meet the individual needs of each student, and this information must be printed in the parental rights notice.

Meets Requirements

Upon review of the IEP form used by the district, the team concluded that the format contains all the required content.

The monitoring team validated through interviews and file reviews that the district develops transition plans that are a coordinated set of activities to prepare students for post school activities.

Through interviews and file reviews, the team validated the district adheres to the IEP team membership requirement.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:33:01:03 Content of Individualized Education Plan

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based on the skill areas affected by the student's disability. The present levels of performance are based on parent input and should be a reflection of the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation. The monitoring team validated the steering committee's out of compliance statements. The team determined the present levels of performance in 10 of 33 student IEPs did not contain skill specific functional information. In addition, student IEP modifications and accommodations consistently had "as needed" for the frequency, which is ambiguous. The IEP team must determine and document the specific frequency of modifications and/or adaptations for all students with disabilities.

When students' present levels of performance indicated they were demonstrating problem behaviors in classes, the monitoring team found "No" was always checked when the IEP team addressed whether the student's general classroom behaviors impede learning.

Annual goals must be measurable and reasonable for the student to accomplish. The monitoring team concluded 14 of 33 files did not have measurable annual goals. Examples of the district not meeting this requirement are: "... will use the language of geometry to discover, analyze and communicate geometric concepts, properties and relationships"; "... will increase receptive and expressive vocabulary development"; and, "... will learn to increase social skills".

In order to make the annual goal measurable, the condition, performance and criteria components must be included either in the annual goal or the short term objectives. The team determined through interviews and file reviews that middle school IEPs had the performance information, but they consistently did not include the condition and criteria either in the annual goal or short-term objectives.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

State tables E, G, I, J, F, and N
File reviews
Surveys

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded that the school district has policies and procedures in place that address the least restrictive environment for students. The committee also found that behavioral intervention plans had been written for students who required them.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated the steering committee's conclusion that the district meets the requirements of least restrictive environment.

The review team observed students receiving special education services in the general education setting. A team member observed a fourth grade classroom. Twenty-two students were present with a teacher, student teacher and special education aide. Groups of four to five students were reviewing questions for a science test. After reading a question, each student had to write the multiple choice answer agreed upon by the group. A student in one group took turns reading and answering the questions; however, the student had a writing disability and received assistance from the aide.

An observation was also conducted in the first grade classroom during math instruction. There were 19 students, teacher, student teacher and special education aide present. The lesson pertained to temperature with the inclusion of interactive work using an overhead and worksheet completion. The aide assisted students by rephrasing the instructions, answering student questions about the worksheet directions and monitoring the students' completion of the worksheet.